DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 841 SP 030 181

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TITLE Teaching and Being: Connecting Teachers' Accounts of Their Lives with Classroom Practice.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 5-9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Autobiographies; Case Studies; *Personal Narratives; Preschool Education; Profiles; *Research Methodology; Self Actualization; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Background; Teacher Motivation; *Teaching Experience

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates the use of the autobiographical method for understanding the complex personal perspectives of teachers as they reflect upon their lives as teachers and individuals. The perspective includes the intellectual, ethical, and emotional stance of the teacher who is engaged in, and reflecting upon teaching. The subjective experiences and the personal feelings of teachers are regarded as valuable for an understanding of teaching. Brief case studies are presented of four preschool teachers. To gather ethnographic and autobiographical information on the teachers they were observed in the classroom setting, interviewed to create for each a "life-narrative", and they engaged in personal correspondence with the author. In interviews, vignettes, and interpretive activities,the goal was to build up a store of reflective information about practice and background in order to develop the beginnings of a thoughtful co-biographical narrative. A discussion is presented on the value of using an autobiographical method to achieve a deeper understanding of the teacher's art. (JD)

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TEACHING AND BEING:
Connecting Teachers' Accounts of Their Lives with Classroom Practice

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A Paper Presented at the

American Education Research Association Annual Meeting

April, 1988

New Orleans, La

SP030181

. . . multiple small spheres of personal experience both echo and enable events shared more widely, expressions of moment in which we recognize that no microcosm is completely separate, no tide pool, no forest, no family, no nation. Indeed, the knowledge drawn from the life of some single organism or community or from the intimate experience of an individual may prove to be relevant to decisions that affect the health of a city or the peace of the world.

Mary Catherine Bateson

Let me introduce you briefly to four teachers:

Janet is a group family day care provider. She began taking children into her home while she was caring for her own two children and has carried that work on even after her youngest son went on to elementary school six years ago. Janet cares for twelve children with the help of two assistants. Before jumping to conclusions, hers is also an exemplary day care home and Janet is often asked to speak about day care issues at community and professional gatherings. Janet has a master's degree from Bank Street College of Education, and she is a leader in the effort to obtain some form of official recognition for group family day care.

Yvonne teaches in a pre-kindergarten program in a public elementary school in New York City. She has three daughters, the eldest in college and the youngest in kindergarten. Yvonne went to City College, taught in day care for ten years, and has taught in an innovative public school for three years. Her husband teaches in the same school and they share a commitment to urban, public education as well as a deep investment in a child-centered approach to teaching. Yvonne is widely recognized among her peers as an outstanding teacher.

B.J. has worked in day care for over ten years as founder, director, and now collective member of B.J.'s Kids Day Care Community. B.J. is largely self-educated, having read widely and deeply in child development and early childhood education. The fact that she never attended college surprises colleagues and associates because of her broad knowledge of and huge reputation in the field. She often speaks at early childhood conferences, and was profiled recently in MS magazine for developing an exemplary non-sexist and non-racist program.

Denise is the mother of four children, two boys and two girls. Denise began teaching in day care in 1978 and has variously been director or head teacher in several settings. Besides teaching and parenting, Denise is a graduate student in educational administration and special education. Denise is well-known and highly regarded among early childhood professionals.

These four are the main characters of a story I wrote recently about teachers and autobiography. Because of my training and the context of my work with these teachers, I almost said that these are the subjects of my study and of course that's also true. If I had used those words, most of you would have been comforted and reassured, while a few might have been put off. In either case, we would have all shared in a sense of familiarity, for the language of the social scientist, of the technician and the expert is not only the common sense language of educational research, but increasingly the everyday language of our modern world.

But my project was not a study in the traditional sense, and the language of the report was not particularly technical. What I attempted, rather, was an unfolding of life narratives and an opening of meaning in which the voices of these four teachers became central. As these teachers examined the dailiness and the ordinariness of their lives with children, and as they looked backward and forward in an attempt to understand the present reality as a moment in an unfinished story, I began to identify themes and patterns in order to achieve a clearer focus on the choices, conflicts, contradictions, tensions, dilemmas, and joys of their lives with children. The talk heard was teacher talk, and so it was also value-talk and feeling-talk. It was talk of the ordinary and

the mundane, and yet it was talk that was frequently eloquent, usually thoughtful, and consistently engaged.

Some might criticize this inquiry for its seeming lack of scientific rigor. I will argue in this paper for the importance of the kind of effort that results in studies of this type, but for now my brief response to the charge of being unscientific is to plead guilty. This work is not based on a positivistic model. It makes no claim to having great predictive value. There is no attempt to couch these words in the assumed bloodless objectivity of science.

Rather, there was an attempt to recast the subjective experiences and the personal feelings of these teachers as valuable in our understanding of teaching. And there was an embracing of the unique, the particular, the possible. Looking back at the brief introductions, note what we have gained and what we have missed thus far. We know, for example, that B.J. has no formal education, and that Janet has a master's degree from Bank Street College. We assume that B.J. has no children. We could, if we chose, find out more information of this type: age, IQ, anything you like. We could search for patterns in these data, patterns that might define good teaching, for example, from the outside.

What we don't know yet, and precisely what this work aimed at, is the insider's perspective. What does any of this mean to these women themselves? What significance does it hold? What value does any of it have in their worlds? How does it impact their teaching? Clearly our introductions, packed with a kind of objective information, are inadequate to answer these other kinds of questions. This initial information may peak our interest, and it may play an important role in our growing understanding, but it is as forgettable as cocktail party conversation

unless we find a way to go beyond, to pierce the veil of facts. If we want to discover things like meaning, value, significance and context in our search for understanding, we must move into other areas and probe more deeply.

Clearly, I chose in this work to discover a lot about a few teachers, rather than a little about a lot of teachers. Instead of aggragating teachers in a search for the common teacher, the point was to celebrate the particular, the uncommon, and the unpredictable. This choice was based on a strong belief that it is in the lived situations of actual teachers -- rather than in, for example, the educational commissions, policy panels, or research institutions -- that the teaching enterprise exists and can best be understood. This required seeing the reality of teaching and teachers in as full a context as possible. The "secret" of teaching after all is in the detail of everyday practice, the very stuff that is washed away in attempts to generalize about teaching. The goal here was not to predict, but perhaps to extend our sense of the possible by portraying some of the breadth and scope of what preschool teaching can be. We do not, of course, end up with the truth, but perhaps more modestly with a burgeoning sense of meaning and knowing grounded in a real person and a concrete practice.

Since reform proposals, curriculum units, and administrative directives ultimately live or die in the hands of individual teachers, it is to individual teachers that we ultimately turn in order to understand teaching. It is true of course that no teacher is an island, none is a perfectly free agent. Teachers are shaped by powerful social and economic forces, forces that coerce and constrain, prod and bombard, push and pull. Teachers particularly are formed by their relationships to

power and their role in a bureaucracy geared to reproducing the social relations of society.

But it is also true that teachers finally decide what goes on in classrooms. When the door is closed and the noise from outside and inside has settled, a teacher chooses. She can decide to satisfy distant demands or not, accommodate established expectations or not, embrace her narrowest self-interest or not. She can decide whether to merely survive another day of inexhaustible demands and limited energy or she can decide, for example, to interpret and invent, resist and rebel. She can decide to link up with others and create something different. There are all kinds of ways to choose, all kinds of ways for people to invent their teaching in a world that is often resistant and always problematic.

So while we note that powerful forces in society have serious and intricate designs on schools, we also acknowledge that any designs must finally be filtered through the minds and the hearts and the hands of teachers. And while teachers may be cajoled or fooled, or (as in these times) threatened or punished into accepting and implementing certain practices, they also might not. In looking at teachers we are looking at the base of the educational pyramid (and in looking at preschool teachers we are at the lower end of the bottom). Ironically, if we look closely enough, we are also looking at the peak of power and possibility.

Because I was interested both in seeing teachers at work and also in understanding how they accounted for the teachers they had each become, I felt that I needed to work simultaneously to construct ethnographic and autobiographical texts. I felt that by observing them, and then by asking them to help me better understand some of the detail of their work -- both phenomenologically and from the perspective of historical

precedent -- we would be able to construct honest and textured portraits of teachers. This kind of exercise, I thought, had the potential to become a powerful tool in teacher education as well as teacher renewal. In creating self-portraits, I thought teachers would become more self-aware, more self-conscious. In becoming more self-conscious, I figured, teachers could also become more intentional, more able to endorse or reject aspects of their own teaching that they found hopeful or contrary, more able to author their own teaching scripts.

During the first phase of the work, I functioned essentially as a participant observer in each classroom over several days, collecting detailed notes, mapping spaces, diagramming and describing each teacher in the context of a specific setting, and attempting to move from broad to more focused and selected accounts of practice. Information was analyzed continuously in an attempt to uncover new questions and reckon with patterns as they emerged. The observations were guided by my own intuition and experience and focused on the structures and routines of each setting, the interactions among the children as well as between the adults and the children, the actions of the teacher, the explicit and implicit goals of each program, and the feeling or tone of each group.

Interviews were a part of the second phase and tended to be informal, allowing for a more equal footing between myself and each teacher than is possible in many traditional research settings. My goal was to create an open-ended, negotiable situation leading to a meaningful narrative text that described and linked together influences, events, people, and experiences that contributed to the creation of the teacher as she finds herself today. Probing the significance of current activity and reconstructing a meaningful past, created the conditions for

each teacher, speaking in her own voice, to critically examine teaching practices and locate them in a continuum from past to future. What emerged was a kind of autobiography, although the word "autobiography" seemed too heavy, too loaded with earth-shaking expectations for the participants. My word was "co-biography" in an attempt to highlight the centrality of collaboration in this project, but that word seemed awkard and unreal too, and so was rarely used. "Life-narratives" was the handy and unanimous usage for what we were constructing, and it was the life-narratives combined with the ethnographaic accounts that emerged as the portraits of preschool teachers. As I developed each portrait I gave a copy to the teacher for revision, comment, and criticism. As far as possible, I retained the original sketch and allowed the response and ensuing dialogue to become another layer enriching the emerging portrait of that teacher teaching and reflecting on her life as it is thought to be meaningful to her teaching.

Besides interviews, this study utilized written correspondence between each teacher and myself. Based sometimes on classroom observations and sometimes on more general questions, I sent memos to each teacher asking about particular observed events or about questions of general interest. Memos included specific requests like, "Describe why you responded as you did to the difficult separation between Amy and her mother yesterday", and more open ones like, "Describe a particularly successful moment in your work last week". The teacher response was in the form of a vignette, a brief work sketch. The vignettes evolved from direct observations and interacted in that context. The dialogue had immediacy as well as development over time. Furthermore, the memos probed for antecedents, for historical knowledge, for autobiographical

explanation. The memos sought context and description, reflection and conclusion, current insight and historical precedent.

The most interesting area of inquiry employed in this second phase, less traditional than either interviews or vignettes, was the use of "non-linear" or "interpretive" activities (Bolin, 1986). An example of a non-linear activity that many people engage in spontaneously is doodling, and an interesting case of doodling providing a turning point in an autobiographical project is offered by Alex Haley describing his work on The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965). Malcom X had wanted his autobiography to be a classic conversion model of autobiography, the testament of a saved person, and so he refused to talk about anything of a personal nature and offered only the most formal statements about hs life. Haley felt that this refusal was disastrous as far as writing a meaningful narrative was concerned. He noticed, however, that as Malcolm X spoke, he often doodled on napkins. Haley took to collecting and reading the napkins, and eventually even to providing Malcolm X with blank paper and pens. It was from the "private utterances of the napkins" (Eakin, 1980, p.191), that Haley formulated the first probing, personal questions that began Malcom X's powerful telling of his social and political goals in the context of his own lived life.

Focused interpretive activities explore the same ground as interviews or vignettes but without the heavy reliance on speaking or writing. They involve working with familiar materials (paper, clay, and paint for example) to represent or symbolize salient experiences. Interpretive activities disengage people from conscious thought and can provide insight and significant discoveries.

For example, an interpretive activity that I used here involved

teachers using clay to depict particularly successful moments in teaching. This is not unlike being asked in an interview to describe a successful moment in teaching, but it offers the possibility of opening to this question in new and surprising ways.

These kinds of activities were tools to round out the store of information about how these teachers see themselves and their work, and to uncover the images these teachers hold about teaching. There was an emphasis on feelings and attitudes, emotions and values. Each activity led to sharing through discussion, but the conversation was animated by the conrete action, the play at hand. Dimensions not easily apprehended in interviews -- like affective dimensions, spiritual and cultural dimensions -- were most naturally addressed here.

Often this disengagement in play proved to be an easier, lighter way to discover relevant moments and led to new insights and deeper, more significant discoveries. It proved on many occasions to be a rich experience, suspending the kind of "reconstructed logic" (Kaplan, 1963) that so often dominates historical accounts. As William Pinar (1975) noted about free associtions, the degree to which one can "fall into past experience" and "relive early and present experiences" is the degree to which information is "phenomenologically accurate" (p.408). Non-linear, interpretive activities helped ground this project in phenomenological accuracy.

In interviews, vignettes, and interpretive activities, the goal was to build up a store of reflective information about practice and background, to develop the beginnings of a thoughtful co-biographical narrative. The kinds of information that contributed to this adventure ranged widely (Beginnings, 1986; Feiman and Floden, 1984; Schon, 1983;

Smyth, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Lightfoot, 1973) but the questions covered can be grouped for convenience into three broad areas of concern:

1. The Reflective Practitioner.

What do you like most about teaching? What are the rewards for you? When do you feel best as a teacher? What are your favorite moments?

What is most difficult about teaching? Do you ever feel like leaving the profession? Why? Why do you stay? If you could, what things would you change in your work?

Which kids appeal to you? Why? Which ones make your work problematic?

What is the role of parents in your work? What should it be?

Why is your space arranged the way it is? Why do you follow particular routines?

Why do you teach as you do? What criteria do you have in mind? What do you take to be valuable in your teaching? What other teachers do you admire? Why?

What is your role in the lives of children and families? What are your goals for children? How do you meet these goals?

What is your role in preparing children for the future? Are there any conflicts between your goals and the school's goals? Society's goals? If so, do the conflicts affect the kids?

2. The Autobiographer.

Can you describe any chance factors that led to your becoming a teacher? Are you sometimes surprised to see what you have become?

When did you decide to become a teacher? What did your decision mean to you at that time? What about teaching interested

or attracted you?

What role, explicitly or implicitly, did your family play in your decision to teach? Do you remember any early experiences that affected your decision to teach?

Do you remember any outstanding teachers from your years as a student? What do you remember? Did this influence your decision in any way?

What was your formal, teacher education like? Did it prepare you for the realities of teaching? Is teaching pretty much what you'd expected? When you first taught, were there any colleagues or mentors who influenced you? How?

Can you remember when you felt comfortable as a teacher, confident with your own philosophy and practical knowledge?

Can you think of early experiences that continue to influence what and how you teach now? Can you describe the central teaching ideas that guide your work and how you came to adopt them?

Have you changed as a teacher over the years? How?

3. The Whole Person.

What is of value to you beyond teaching? Are you involved in any social or political groups?

What concerns you most about children and families today? About the state of society or the world?

Are you involved in any other projects or interests outside of teaching? What? How are they important to you?

What have you read recently that was significant to you?

What do you imagine you'll be doing in five years? In ten years?

As in other studies of teaching, I was looking at an enterprise that

is complex, idiosyncratic, and largely mysterious, something David Denton (1974) describes as a "world of intentional action, individuated and shared meanings, affectional ties, tensive relationships, in which there is always the possibility of one's saying no" (p.108). I was looking at people who are assumed to be moral, self-determining agents even as they are entangled and constrained by a host of pressures and factors. And I was looking at four lives -- not categories or summaries -- being lived in a shared world. I was attempting to hear their voices, to attend to their stories with care and hope.

Patterns from Portraits

The continuities and harmonies of the portraits of these four teachers are distinct and yet link togehter in an overarching way. For each of these women, teaching involves a search for meaning in the world. Teaching has become for each a life project, a calling, a vocation that is an orgnizing center of all other activities. Teaching is past and future as well as present, it is background as well as foreground, it is depth as well as surface. Teaching is pain and humor, joy and anger, dreariness and epiphany. For these three teaching is world building, it is architecture and design, it is purpose and moral enterprise. Teaching is a way of being in the world that breaks through the boundaries of the traditional job and redefines all of life and teaching itself in the process.

In their outstanding study of contemporary American culture, Habits of the Heart, Robert Bellah (1985) and his colleagues make a penetrating observation about work:

> ... with the coming of large-scale industrial society it became more difficult to see work as a contribution to the whole and easier to view it as a segmented, self-interested activity. But though the idea of a calling has become attentuated and the largely private "job" and "career" have taken its place, something of the notion of calling lingers on, not necessarily opposed to, but in addition to job and career. In a few economicaly marginal, but symbolicalllly significant instances, we can still see what a calling is (p.66).

Bellah's example of an economically marginal but symbolically significant worker happens to be a ballet dancer, but that description perfectly fits many fine teachers, including these four. These teachers continue to find in their work a vital link between private and public worlds, between personal fulfillment and social responsibility. They bring to their work a sense of commitment, of connectedness to other people and to shared traditions, and of collective good will. They also seem to reject the calculation and contingency that pervades so much of work today, embodying instead a sense of work closely tied to a sense of self, a view that work is not merely what one does, but who one is. And they accomplish all of this as an act of affirmation in a social and cultural surround that devalues their contribution and rewards them sparingly.

In contrast to the dominant pattern of our society which defines "personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life in ways that leave the individual suspended in glorious, but terrifying isolation" (Bellah et al, 1985, p.6), we see here people whose work is "morally inseparable" (p.66) from their lives, and whose social commitments are coherent with their private pursuits. These teachers seem to have found ways to talk of values in an environment that constrains that talk, and to be public and political in a world that diminishes both. It is worth nothing that the community each has built is a women's community in

terms of who is present as well as who is served. It is a community dominated by mothers and women care-givers. Men are not totally absent from the preschool community, but they are often peripheral or marginal to the daily life and the central concerns.

Janet describes her networks and political projects as tied intimately to her childcare center. Her caring for children is what forces her into the political world, and her political work is what allows her to continue her work with children. Janet's work literally takes over her house, and her life is the substance of her work. For B.J., working to enable children to grow and to learn also makes her powerful in the world, and these two aspects of empowerment are inseparable. She describes her friendships and her projects outside of day care as emanating from her work and linked directly to it. And Denise and Yvonne, while each names a variety of roles she plays in the world from mother and sister to wife and friend, sees herself most productive and integrated as a teacher. Each sees the identities and responsibilities enriching one another, and sees herself as centrally a teacher.

There are, of course, teachers who are narrower in their concerns and more clerly bounded in their jobs than are these four outstanding teachers. And yet, teaching is the kind of activity that calls out strongly for an investing of one's self. For many, perhaps most, teachers the sense of calling exists. It may be only a flicker of memory or a feeling dulled by years of bureaucratic maneuvering, endless demands, and excruciating complexity. It may exist now only as a palinsest, that shadowy little erasure that leaves tracks on the page. But somewhere along the way teaching called out to teachers as a chance

to love children, to make a difference in their lives, and to remake the world. Teachers somewhere, sometime, felt called to teach.

Possibility and Limitation

If this inquiry is to have any lasting value, if it is to be reprieved from "the special boneyard of letters where dissertations go to die, if ever they have lived" (West, 1987, p.1), it will be because it transcends some of the limitations and constraints (the precious, distancing terminology and the special format, for example), of traditional social science research and reveals a chorus of voices of preschool teachers themselves. Subjectivity is this study's singular strength:

> An obligation of being alive is to recognize how much of people remains unseen, unknown, plumable only by guessed-at guessers. Who dare decree how subjective we should be when subjectivity is what we mostly are and when it is ... what we resort to in order to save ourselves from becoming mere organisms for clinicians to measure and anatomists to tag? (West, 1987, p.40).

John Dewey (1934) had something similar in mind when he made a distinction between seeing and recognizing. To see something, according to Dewey, is to explore it, to rivet one's attention upon it, and to sustain one's search into its qualities and textures. Seeing involves a deep and active engagement. Recognizing, by contrast, is akin to labeling, categorizing, or tagging. The mind turns off, the search is done. This is not to say that there is not a given world the same for all -- there is -- only that there are endless versions of that world. If we restrict our vision to recognizing and not seeing, we deny too much. This is a terrific danger in research on teaching, a danger that qualitative research attempts to resist. I'm reminded of a wonderful

passage in Don De Lillo's (1985) bizarre novel, White Noise, in which two characters drive off to see a tourist attraction known as the most photographed barn in America. Once they have braved the crowds, the tourist buses, the little stand selling postcards, one of them notes, "Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn" (p.12). Just so research on teaching. Herbert Zimiles (1986) points out that, "We have a strong hunger for evidence [and] are so much more ready to be swayed by evidence -- no matter how flawed and deficient -- than we are by rational argument -- no matter how powerful -- that research findings, despite their known limitations, are often used to support [questionable] program planning and action..." (p.199). In other words, we need to think and see clerly, and we need to speak thoughtfully. We need to talk with teachers, not always to them or about them or for them, and allow them to develop voice in the conversation so that they and we can share in deepending our collective understanding of what teaching is and can become.

Stephen Jay Gould (1987) acknowledges in a related context that "it may seem quaint to some people who fail to grasp the power of natural history that this great work of science largely tells stories about individual creatures" (p.23). But Gould insists that:

> ... there are no essences ... no such thing as "the chimpanzee." You can't bring a few into a laboratory, make some measurements, calculate an average, and find out, thereby, what chimpness is. There are no shortcuts. Individuality does more than matter; it is of the essence (p.23).

Gould concludes that while we need both methods in their appropriate places, "close observations of individual differences can be as powerful a method in science as the quantification of predictable behavior in a

zillion identical atoms ..." (p.24).

Of course, if subjectivity and reciprocity are strengths, they are also weaknesses. This project, for example, has no particular preditive value. There may be insights or patterns or understandings, but there are no generalized rules. Rob Traver (1987) addresses this problem by claiming that the "rules of statistics and probability, and the logic of similarities and differences in attributes ... are not ... the only path to generalizability" (p.449). He makes a case for narrative and its cousin, autobiography, as pathways to generalization, claiming that before statistics came to dominate our discourse about people, stories were a powerful way of knowing who and what we were. He describes "books in which the people within them, in living out their lives, told me things about my life" (p.450). This helps us see that there can be value in a study such as this, but it only circles around the problem of predictability. There may well be useful insights here for people beyond the participants themselves, but there is still no prognosis.

In choosing a method that probes deeply into the work and thought of a few teachers, there is the limitation of being unable to say anything about a lot of teachers. This is a conscious trade: those who say something about a lot of teachers choose to say something that is partial and small in its own way. But in those other studies there at least can come an end point, a time when a hypothesis is proved or disproved. Here there is no final product, no neat result. Consequently there is no obvious time to stop. One insight unfolds toward another, one utterance invites a response, one story begins a dialogue. Wherever we stop there is a sense of arbitrariness.

Toward an Autobiographical Method

The promise of an autobiographical method lies in its ability to expand the available natural history of a given population as well as in its practical, action-oriented stance. Autobiography is a process of self-formation and self-declaration, it is a process that pushes back memory revealing entanglements but also choices. In this way autobiography shows us not only what we've been made, but what we've made of what we've been made (Pinar, 1986). It is a method that connects the inner self to the public self. Autobiography widens the scope of choice and in the process, hopefully enlarges both the autobiographer and the reader.

These portraits are self-made. Each portrait is a creative act. As such each portrait is its own kaleidoscope, each turn surprising and enlightening, creating a different original drama all the more breath-taking because it will not stand still. It is often difficult to put the kaleidoscope down, but even then it does no good, for when we look again we are invited into other dazzling turns, other dreams and dances.

Of course, writing down lives smoothes them out. There is falseness in the writing. But writing down lives also makes them public, and there is validity in making a public record. This is the tension of autobiography. Authenticity versus distortion.

One of the great deficiencies in teacher education today is the lack of an autobiographical sensibility and practice. Dan Lortie (1975) advocated using student autobiographies as well as literature and biography in teacher education as a way "to increase the person's awareness of his [sic] beliefs and preferences about teaching and to have him expose them to personal examination" (p.231). This would allow

teachers to "become truly selective and work out a synthesis of past and current practices in terms of his own values and understandings" (p.231).

Lortie compares teaching unfavorably in this respect to other human services:

> Social workers, clinical psychologists, and psychotherapists are routinely educated to consider their own personalities and to take them into account in their work with people. Their stance is supposed to be analytic and open; one concedes and works with one's own limitations--it is hoped--in a context of self-acceptance. The tone of teacher interviews and their rhetoric reveals no such orientation; I would characterize it as moralistic, rather than analytic and self-accusing, rather than self-accepting (p.159).

Madeleine Grumet (1978) notes that "autobiography, like teaching, combines two perspectives, one that is a distanced view -- rational, reflective, analytic, and one that is close to its subject matter -- immediate, filled with energy and intention" (p.212). For Grumet autobiography establishes the legitimacy of the teachers' own questions, their "stories, reminiscences of grade school, travel, family relationships, tales of humiliation, triumph, confusion, revelation" (p.209). Autobiography also establishes a public record, the possibility for dialogue:

> When the stories are very general and muted they bury their questions in cliches and happy endings, and the supervisor's response is to ask for more detail. When the stories are extremely detailed, they often exclude any reference to the writer's response to the events that are chroncled as well as the meanings that have been drawn from them, and then the supervisor's approach is to ask what these meanings might be (p.209).

Peter Abbs (1974) further articulates the value of autobiography in education, arguing for a view of education that connects thought with feelings and intentions. Education for Abbs takes place in a knower, a

subject, an "assenting individual" (p.4), and that subject exists in a given world. "It is in individual experience", Abbs writes, "that I and the many interacting worlds of Nature, Time, Relationships, History, come together in an intricate, creative, and largely unconscious manifold" (p.4). The dialetical interchange and experience of a subject in an objective world provide for Abbs the "foundation we are seeking for the discipline of autobiography" (p.4).

Abbs denounces teacher training as methods courses preoccupied with facts and techniques, and advocates instead a deeper model of education that could somehow relate being and knowing, existence and education. For this, Abbs sees a central role for autobiography:

> ..how better to explore the infinite web of connections which draws self and world together in one evolving gestalt than through the act of autobiography in which the student will recreate his [sic] past and trace the growth of his experience through lived time and felt relationships? What better way to assert the nature of true knowledge than to set the student ploughing the field of his own experience? ... may he not discover that "education" [is] that action of the inward spirit, by which ... one discovers who one is? (p.6).

For Abbs, looking backward, clarifying the unclear, discovering the unknown, creates the conditions for imagining a future different from today. Asking, "Who and I? How did I get here?" opens the door for asking "Who will I be? How will I get there?"

Rob Traver (1987) advocates an autobiographical method that "emphasize[s] the first person perspective of the teacher, a perspective that includes the intellectual, ethical, and emotional stance of the teacher while he or she is engaged in and reflecting on teaching" (p.443). The first person accounts move the teacher or the student of teaching into dialogue with others and lead to "a new consciousness about the intelligence, ethics, and emotions of teaching", a consciousness that does "not contain the silence of the old one" (p.444).

This new consciousness is a beginning but it is not enough. William Pinar (1986) describes autobiography as a "returning home", conscious of origins and better able to integrate issues from the past into the present. But, he asks:

> Once home, is the issue resolved? The issue of authenticity may be, but the educational issue remains. What did I make of what I have been made? ... As significant as self-knowledge and authenticity are, as important as it is now for teachers to exemplify as well as know these modes d'etre, they do not constitute historical end states. They set the stage for asking: What attitudes and actions are appropriate, given this self-knowledge? (p.4).

Because no teacher can or should entirely escape or transcend subjectivity, teachers, whatever else they teach, teach themselves. They seek an authentic meeting of subjects -- a meeting that acknowledges the humanity, intentions, agendas, maps, dreams, desires, hopes, fears, loves, and pains of each -- and in that meeting they model what they themselves value. Fine teachers tend to be ware of this and so work to make explicit, at least to themselves, their own values, priorities, and stories, because they know that these things will impact teaching practice. Being aware of oneself as the instrument of one's teaching and aware of the story that makes one's life sensible allows for greater change and growth as well as greater intentionality in teaching choices.

Teachers have a special responsibility for self-awareness, for clarity and integrity, because teachers are in such a powerful position to witness, influence, and shepherd the choices of other. In dialogue with a student, a teacher can "underscore his subjectness -- encourage him to stand personally related to what he says and does" (Noddings, 1984, p.178) but only if the teacher is aware of her own subjectness, able to stand personally related herself. Students of teaching must be

given on-going opportunities to describe their pathways to teachng and must be guided to understand those pathways as complex, idiosyncratic, alive, and changing. Students of teaching need space and time to author their own teaching texts. Because teachers are the instruments of their own practice, developing an wareness of self is part of becoming a thoughtful, intentional teacher. The philosopher Maxine Greene (1978) argues that:

> Persons are more likely to ask their own questions and seek their own transcendence when they feel themselves grounded in their personal histories, their lived lives. That is what I mean by "landscapes". A human being lives, as it were, in two orders--one created by his or her relations with the perceptual fields that are given in experience, the other created by his or her relations with a human and social environment. It is important to hold in mind, therefore, that each of us achieved contact with the world from a particular vantage point, in terms of a particular biography. All of this underlies our present perspective and affects the way we look at things and talk about things and structure our realities. To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world (p.2).

Robert Bellah (1985) noted that "Finding oneself means, among other things, finding the story or narrative in terms of which one's life makes sense" (p.81). For Denise, B.J., Yvonne and Janet, working out autobiographical accounts was in part a process of making sense and self-discovery. Each noted, when questioned about how my presence had been a disturbance in her field, that the process of being involved in this project was in part a process that elevated her teaching and called forth the best she had to offer. It is possible that a kind of steady, empathetic scrutiny improves teaching. There is no reason whatsoever that this kind of work needs to be the exclusive province of university-based researchers. This method could be adapted to action research

projects, peer review, and teacher-run development projects. These teacher autobiographies provide the kind of detail from which one can interpret practice, value, and belief in light of an unfolding story. For teacher educators, researchers, and especially for teachers themselves who are seeking understanding and meaning in their work, this enterprise may provide a means of stretching their own contexts. A successful autobiographical method has positive implications for allowing greater questioning, critique, and intentionality.

Alice Walker's comment about her co-biographical projects among black women in Mississippi is applicable in a way to teachers:

> Slowly I am getting these stories together. Not for the public, but for the ladies who wrote them. Will seeing each other's lives make any of the past clearer to them? I don't know. I hope so. I hope contradictions will show, but also the faith and grace of a people under continuous pressures. So much of the satisfying work of life begins as an experiment; having learned this, no experiment is ever quite a failure (p.17).

Autobiography is an essential piece that is largely missing in research on teaching, in teacher education and renewal, and in our understanding of the teaching enterprise. But autobiography is not enough. Autobiography, the inner journey, must have a compliment - an outer journey, a journey that includes inquiry, reflection, critique and collaboration. Autobiography, an exploration of inner space, must be in tension with the expansion of a public space if it is to have any lasting value. But that is another story, and this story ends here.

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